

Preliminary International Examination Report—Supplementary Sheet
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1. Claim 1 pertains to a fixing element for fixing a component on a support part. This element comprises a retaining part, a hollow anchor foot and a sprung stop arranged therebetween, wherein the wall of the anchor foot contains two opposite openings, wherein two sprung arms that are spread apart in the direction of the retaining part and have faces on their ends respectively originate at the lower edges of said openings, and wherein the faces of two diagonally opposite sprung arm pairs lie in two different horizontal planes. This is known from DE 81 13 637 U.

In order to allow the utilization of the fixing element on support parts with different material thicknesses and with different bore diameters while still ensuring a secure and rigid anchoring, the respective sprung arm pairs have different lengths, extend radially outward different distances and contain several steps from their outer edges inward in order to be respectively fixed on the lower edge. Thus, several step surfaces are formed in different planes and several vertical contact surfaces are formed at different radial distances from the center axis of the anchor foot. The faces and the step surfaces of one respective sprung arm pair lie in the same horizontal planes and the individual vertical contact surfaces lie at the respectively same radial distance from the center axis, but in different planes and at different radial distances from the center axis relative to the other sprung arm pair.

This is novel and commercially applicable and based on inventive activity because no corresponding suggestions are provided in any of the cited documents.

The sprung arms according to publication US 4 981 310 A cited in the search report also contain steps that lie at different radial distances from the center axis and in different horizontal planes. However, this document does not mention that the element could be inserted into different bore diameters although this would, in principle, be possible due to the design of the sprung arms. Since only one sprung arm pair is provided, this US publication as well as the other cited publications lack a reference to the offset arrangement of step surfaces and radial faces on the different sprung arm pairs.

2. Dependent Claim 3 defines advantageous embodiments of the fixing element according to Claim 1 and consequently also fulfills the applicable requirements.

3. Claim 2 contains characteristics that pertain to the diameter of the bore, into which the element is inserted. This claim is ambiguous because this bore does not form part of the fixing element (Article 6, PCT).

4. In addition, it was determined that the figures and the description/claims contradict one another. In the figures, the step surfaces 9 and 10 are not drawn horizontally although the term "horizontal step surface" is used in the description as well as the claims. This also represents an ambiguity in accordance with Article 6, PCT.

5. The characteristics of the preamble of Claim 1 were not provided with reference symbols in parentheses (Regulation 6.2 b), PCT).

The reference symbol 15 that is mentioned on page 7 and identifies the umbrella-shaped stop could not be found in the figures.

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